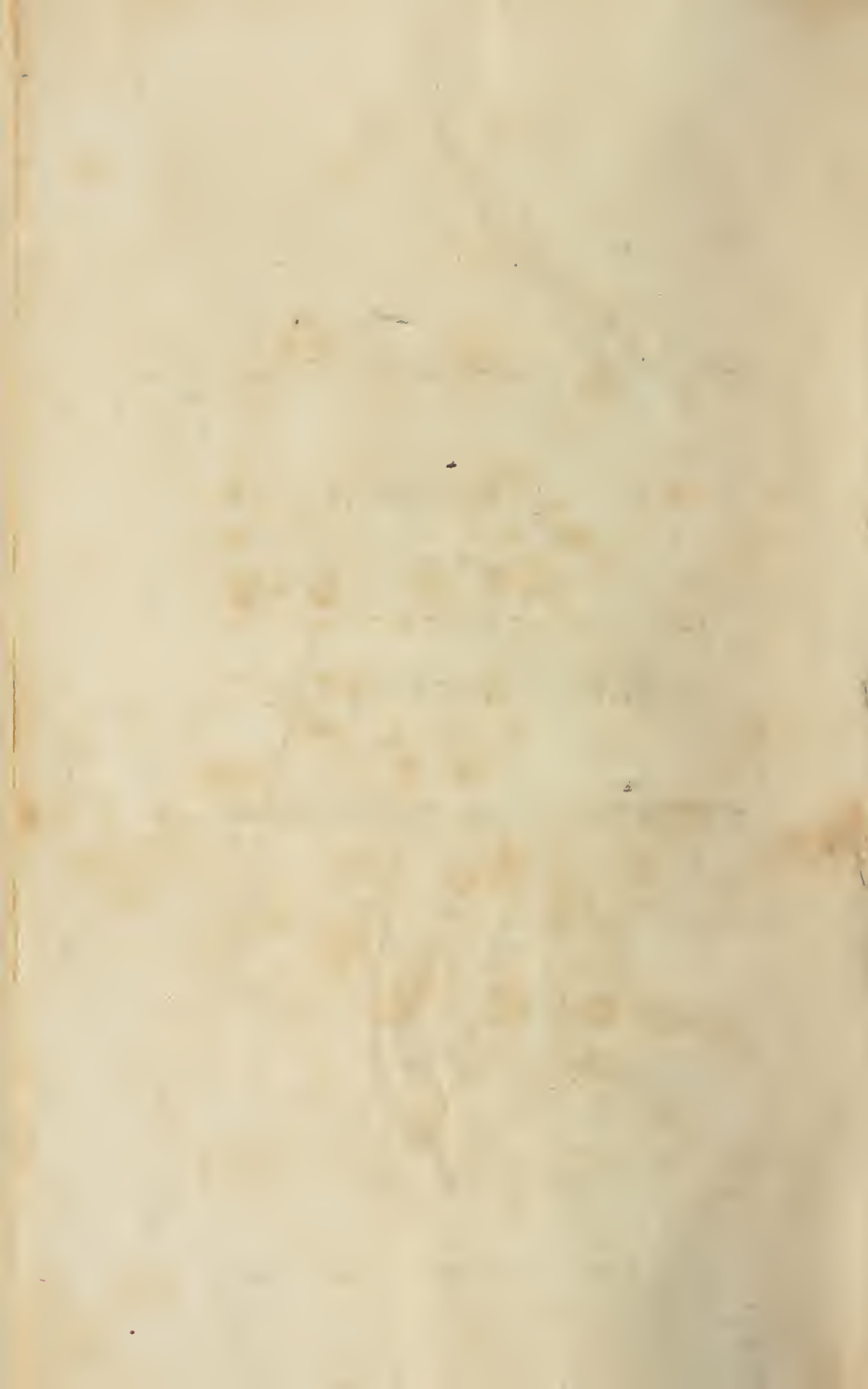


THOUGHTS
ON THE
FORMATION OF THE LATE AND PRESENT
ADMINISTRATIONS.

SECOND EDITION.



THOUGHTS

ON THE

FORMATION OF THE LATE AND PRESENT

ADMINISTRATIONS.

BY LORD ARCHIBALD HAMILTON.

“ The discretionary Power of the Crown in the Formation of Ministry,
“ abused by bad or weak Men, has given rise to a System, which, without
“ directly violating the Letter of any Law, operates against the Spirit of the
“ whole Constitution.”

BERKE's Thoughts on the Present Discontents.

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THOUGHTS, &c.

IN a country, of which the constitution is formed on popular principles, and exists in purity in proportion as they prevail; where the chief and most effectual power of the state, is lodged in the hands of its nominal servants; and where every individual is presumed to have an interest in the appointment of ministers, and has, in fact, (by means of the national representatives) a remote controul upon their conduct—in such a country, the mode in which an administration is formed, can never be a subject of indifference.

So essentially does the due exercise of

authority, depend upon the source from whence it is derived, so deeply does the birth and origin of power in one administration, affect the principles by which succeeding ones are governed, that the talents and integrity of the men of whom it is composed, are not, perhaps, of more importance to the welfare of the empire, than is the manner of their being called into office, to the purity and permanence of the constitution.

It is under this impression, that the following Observations are submitted to the public.

The formation of the late and present administration, appears to have been conducted upon principles fundamentally opposite to the spirit of the constitution, and subversive of its dearest interests, and best pledge of permanency; and as they have both ostensibly proceeded from the same

hands*, and as it is to those very hands that the safety, the interests, the honour, and the resources of the country are now *exclusively* committed, it becomes an object of no mean importance, to examine the justice and validity of this opinion.

It is not the conduct, the ability, or the honesty of either administration, that it is proposed to discuss, but merely the manner of their coming into office.

The real causes of Mr. Pitt's retiring, in March, 1801, were shrouded in mystery at the time. And whatever might be the merits of Mr. Addington, his successor, his appointment was certainly matter of very general surprise. These circumstances alone, it may be contended, afford presumptive

* Mr. Pitt's activity in praising and advising the late administration on its assumption of power, induced the public to regard the change as a mere juggle—They suspected some intrigue would soon develop itself by his return to office.

proof, that both the retreat of the one, and the appointment of the other, proceeded, not from the avowed or implied opinion of parliament, or from any other expression of public sentiment, but from some cause adverse to the principles and spirit of the constitution — some cause, known to the nation only by its effects, and apparently rendered more forcible in its operation, by the very secrecy, which made it more unconstitutional in its principle. The general surprise at Mr. Addington's appointment was such as naturally resulted from the former situation of the individual selected, and from his supposed inadequacy to fulfil the duties of a station, to which no man ever thought he could aspire.

The retreat of Mr. Pitt, is not the subject of present discussion, but the introduction of his successor to office.—Whether this latter event, was the effect of court intrigue, or private favouritism, it is not very material to determine. It certainly was not, what it

is contended, the appointment of a minister in this country, ought always to be, the result of general popularity, of high repute, of tried ability, of growing fame, or of public confidence.—Mr. Addington was certainly not recommended to his Majesty's choice, either by the applauding voice of the people in its irregular exertion without doors, or by its regular and legitimate course within:—He was called into ministerial being, equally to the astonishment of the people and the house of commons.

Whatever, therefore, might have been the merit or the talents of Mr. Addington and his colleagues, their coming into office was without the desire, or concurrence of any party, any public body, or large description of persons in the nation. They started (comparatively to those, who, in good times, have been called to power and trust,) from the walks of private life, suddenly, and at once, to a situation of the

highest eminence and most extensive influence their country could bestow:—and the administration, as well as the minister himself, may fairly be stated to have been, to all purposes of public confidence, strangers to the nation.

Mr. Pitt did, indeed, endeavour to maintain an opposite doctrine, in the splendid panegyric he bestowed upon them, on their first appearance upon the treasury bench. But it is unnecessary to combat an opinion, so palpably opposite to the sentiments of the house, and the country, at the time as well as since—and so feebly supported by argument, upon that memorable occasion. It is worth while, however, to remark the deplorable difficulty, to which Mr. Pitt must have felt himself reduced to establish his position, when his chief argument to prove Mr. Addington a public man, in such sense as rendered him constitutionally eligible to the office of prime minister, was, that “he was

“in rank the first commoner in the country”—a rank derived from his office and to end with it. Mr. Pitt ought to have recollected, that the question was, not, Mr. Addington’s rank in society, but in public estimation—not the grounds of his precedence at court, but the grounds of his precedence in the country. He must have been aware, and so must every man who heard him, that precisely the same presumption of fitness to be minister, as resulted from his being, “in rank, the first Commoner in the country,” had attended every past, and would attend every future, speaker of the house of commons.

“*Every sort of government,*” says Mr. Burke, “*ought to have its administration correspondent to its legislature.*—If it should be otherwise, things must fall into an hideous disorder. The people of a free commonwealth, who have taken such care that their laws should be the result of general consent, cannot be so senseless

“ as to suffer their executory system to be
 “ composed of persons, on whom they have
 “ no dependence, and whom no proofs of
 “ the public love and confidence have re-
 “ commended to those powers, upon the
 “ use of which the very being of the state
 “ depends.” Again, the same great autho-
 rity states, “ that, till lately, it was always
 “ held the first duty of parliament *to refuse*
 “ *to support government, until power was in*
 “ *the hands of persons, who were acceptable to*
 “ *the people, or while factions predominated in*
 “ *the court, in which the nation had no con-*
 “ *fidence.* Thus,” he adds, “ all the good
 “ effects of popular election were supposed
 “ to be secured to us, without the mis-
 “ chiefs attending on perpetual intrigue,
 “ and a distinct canvass for every parti-
 “ cular office, throughout the body of the
 “ people. This was the most noble and re-
 “ fined part of our constitution *.”

* Thoughts on the Causes of the present Discontents.

How far any portion of the substance or any particle of the spirit, of these constitutional axioms, was apparent in the formation of the late administration, is left to the public to decide; as also, how far they are themselves founded upon the genuine principles of the British constitution. But, if the doctrine be sound, and the application of that doctrine be correct, it seems to follow as a necessary consequence, that the formation of the late administration proceeded in such a manner, and upon such grounds, as to exclude it, not only from any legitimate constitutional support, but even from any just pretensions to such endurance by the country, as might afford time for a trial of its merits.

It was an administration "constitutionally impotent, because supported by no party in the nation," and was admirably calculated, whether formed with such in-

tention or not, to teach Parliament “ a
 “ total indifference to the persons, rank,
 “ influence, abilities, connexions, and cha-
 “ racter of the ministers of the crown”—
 and thus “ to secure to the court the
 “ uncontrouled and unlimited use of its
 “ own vast influence, under the sole direc-
 “ tion of its own private favour*.”

Whether any such odious objects were in view, or any such odious principles were secretly entertained, it is not very easy to decide. But most assuredly, the occurrences of that time, and the appearances of the present, would abundantly justify a suspicion, that they were—be that as it may, however, the noxious effects of appointing the late administration upon the strength, honour, fame, and prosperity, of the country, are not more manifest, than the manner of its formation, is plainly

* Thoughts on the Causes of the present Discontents.

and palpably prejudicial to the constitution.

It may, perhaps, appear uncandid, to presume, that the late ministry owed its existence to Mr. Pitt, without adducing any proof of such a position. In justification of this presumption, we must rely upon the general impression at the time; upon the panegyric bestowed upon them individually and collectively, by Mr. Pitt, in the house of commons; upon the support he originally gave them; and 'upon the assertions of a late pamphlet*, published with all the parade and zeal of an official manifesto.

Nor has this opinion, though very generally received, been ever contradicted by Mr. Pitt, or by his friends: one circumstance indeed, militates strongly against

* *Curfory Remarks upon the present State of Parties.*

the supposition; namely, that, the motive assigned for Mr. Pitt's resignation, being inability to carry the catholic question, which he thought essential to the welfare of the country, and the ground of Mr. Addington's admission to office, being a *pledge* invariably to resist it*, it seems incredible that the same mind should have dictated his own resignation, and the appointment of Mr. Addington as his successor.—The validity of this objection will, however, be speedily put to the test, as it must shortly be seen, whether the same man, who quitted office three years ago, because he was unable to procure for the catholics, in Ireland, those benefits he had engaged to obtain for them, has now returned to power, under the pledge of his immediate predecessor, to resist the introduction of any measure leading to their emancipation.

* Postliminious Preface to Plowden's History of Ireland.

But whatever may be the fact, it can have little influence upon the foregoing opinions on the formation of the late ministry. For if the bare supposition of Mr. Pitt's being the author of it, be considered as a libel upon his character and fame—if such was its quality or its origin, that to ascribe any influence or concern in its formation, be, to cast odium and to impute delinquency, then it will appear tolerably evident, that the sentiments, which we have expressed, are not wholly destitute of foundation.

These considerations may also suggest to the judgment and good sense of the people of England, a question or two of no small constitutional importance, and of no small influence on their future interests and future welfare.—It may induce them to enquire by what means?—by whose advice?—and under what responsibility?—the late administration took its rise? and whether in “a free country and a free parliament, there

“ should not exist, some better reason for
 “ supporting the ministers of the crown,
 “ than that short one, *that the king has*
 “ *thought proper to appoint them**.”

Another sentence from the same illustrious statesman, concentrates the foregoing observations, and illustrates their spirit and tendency in language peculiarly forcible, and with a singular justness of application. —“That man,” says Mr. Burke, “who before he comes into power has no friends, or who, coming into power, is obliged to desert his friends, or who, losing it, has no friends to sympathise with him; he who has no sway among any part of the landed or commercial interest, but whose whole importance has began *with his office and is sure to end with it*, is a person who ought never to be suffered by a controuling Parliament to continue

* Thoughts on the Causes of the present Discontents.

“ in any of those situations which con-
 “ fer the lead and direction of all our
 “ public affairs, because *Such a man has*
 “ *no connexion with the interest of the peo-*
 “ *ple*.*”

A circumstance, which occurred a twelve-month ago, tends forcibly to confirm and sanction these prejudices against Mr. Addington's administration; and seems fully to evince the sentiments of the parties concerned, upon that important branch of domestic policy—domestic in its exercise, yet influencing, in its effect, the entire empire and all its concerns—the formation of a British Ministry. The circumstance alluded to, is, the negotiation carried on last year, for Mr. Pitt's return to office; and it is too closely connected with our present subject, not to demand some notice.

* Thoughts on the Causes of the present Discontents.

It would not, perhaps, be fair, to lay this transaction to the charge of any individual. It terminated in nothing. We know, however, that such a negotiation was afloat, and that it had its origin, its continuance, and its close, in an unconstitutional secrecy. It was begun, conducted, and ended mysteriously — and *therefore*, *prima facie*, was liable to great objection, in a country, the spirit of whose constitution demands, that all arrangements of its executive administration should be conducted, on public and popular principles.

It is not intended to discuss the conduct of the parties concerned—This negotiation is only mentioned as a proof that court intrigue, and secret advisers of the crown, exist in these times as well as others; and exist in a full and eager readiness, to exert their baneful influence upon every favourable opportunity. To devise means, and to exert a spirit competent to counteract such

efforts, whenever they are made, is a public concern. It cannot be denied, that if the negotiation alluded to, had taken effect, the government of this country would have been transferred from one person to another, without any avowed, or visible interference of king, lords, commons, or people.

Does the constitution authorise such a proceeding? Can such a principle, (or rather want of principle) be profitable to the country? Can it answer any other purpose than to prove, “ that the mere influence of
 “ the court, naked of all support, and def-
 “ titute of all management, is abundantly
 “ sufficient for all its own purposes*?”

How far Mr. Pitt entered into this negotiation, on what grounds, or with what view, or even that he entered into it at all, it would be very difficult to prove; but certainly, the general belief at the time was,

* Thoughts on the Causes of the present Discontents.

and has since continued to be, that he did listen to clandestine proposals, and would have promoted their success, provided *his own terms* could have been obtained.—Yet this secret bargain, if concluded, would have involved in it, neither more nor less, than the whole power of the country.

The part Mr. Pitt acted, appears to have proceeded in the same spirit of secret management, and private intrigue, as produced — and produced, if not by his means, certainly, with his approbation—the then existing administration. And to those, who believed Mr. Addington to have originally owed his situation to Mr. Pitt, and to have held it only during pleasure, the subsequent conduct of Mr. Pitt, affords strong ground of presumptive evidence, and matter of indignant triumph.—Up to the failure of this negotiation, Mr. Pitt supported Mr. Addington,—from that time, he has opposed him.

It is not against any individual instance of intrigue, that the present observations are directed; it is against the system of forming administrations, by private cabal, and private bargain; and of conducting the government without any reference to popular grounds or public principles—"a system, which," as Mr. Burke says, "without directly violating the letter of any law, operates against the spirit of the whole constitution *."

If the reader should be inclined to consider these remarks, rather as the offspring of imagination, than founded upon facts—and to impute them to the workings of party zeal, rather than to the honest efforts of public spirit, let the circumstances be called to mind, which have given them birth—let it be remembered, that they are applied to a system, which produced the late administration, composed of such men as Mr.

* Thoughts on the Causes of the present Discontents.

Addington, Mr. Yorke, Mr. Bragge, Mr. Hiley Addington, and Mr. Tierney, to the exclusion of such men as Mr. Fox, Mr. Grey, Mr. Pitt, Mr. Wyndham, and Mr. Grenville.—Let it too be remembered, to what a perilous crisis, both of foreign and domestic politics, they have reference—let the former and present situation of the country, be impartially surveyed, to ascertain whether it be in a course of prosperity or of decay—let it be fairly weighed, how far the welfare of the country be dependant on the wisdom of its counsels, and how far both are dependant upon the formation of its ministry, and upon excluding from such formation, “all private will and favour”—and then, it is hoped, that these observations, important in themselves, will appear directed against a system, which not only really exists, but is perpetually at work, and which “is driving hard to the ruin of the country—
 “sapping the foundations of its liberty, disturbing the sources of its domestic tranquil-

“ lity, weakening its government over its dependencies, and degrading it from all its importance in the system of Europe *.”

Such appears to have been the tendency of Mr. Addington's administration — but how far this evil consequence to the country, is imputable to the manner of its original formation, after what has been said, it is left to the public to determine.

It should be recollected, however, that, as an administration must always, of necessity, be formed, if fair and constitutional means are not adhered to, such as are unfair and unconstitutional will be adopted ; and that, if the wise and virtuous characters of the country are not employed in its formation, and comprised in its composition, the weak and the wicked will necessarily usurp their place.

* Thoughts on the Causes of the present Discontents.

It is this reflection, which renders it essential to impress upon the public mind, that the only means of securing the important duties of government to the hands best fitted for the discharge of them, is, a firm and constitutional rejection of such men as have given no pledge or security that they are adequate, in talent, or integrity, to the trust.

“ Every good political institution,” says Mr. Burke, “ must have a preventive operation, as well as remedial. It ought to have a natural tendency to exclude bad men from government, and not to trust for the safety of the state, to subsequent punishment alone.”

Having concluded our observations on the formation of the late ministry, before we proceed to consider the formation of the present, it will be necessary, to say a few words on the course of events, which occurred in the intermediate time.

Mr. Pitt quitted office in March, 1801. The Catholic question was considered as the immediate cause of his retreat; and this was confirmed by the assertions of his friends, and by his own parliamentary declarations. In what manner, or to what extent, any differences had previously existed in the cabinet, it would be presumptuous to conjecture; but there is reason to believe that disagreements had existed, for some time, and that Mr. Pitt availed himself of the unanimity which prevailed on the catholic question, to dissolve (by persisting in the cabinet opinion against the determination of his majesty) an administration, which he could no longer govern as his dependants, nor endure, upon terms of individual equality.

Be this as it may, he quitted office under a cloud of mystery, which has never been dispelled. His successor, Mr. Addington, was considered at the time as substantially appointed by himself, and as pledged to resist the

catholic question. Both these surmises have received considerable strength since that time, from the assertions of two pamphlets formerly alluded to*.

Soon after, and before the commencement of the ensuing Session of Parliament, preliminaries of peace were signed, under the auspices of Mr. Addington, and approved of, by Mr. Pitt, but censured by his former colleagues. From this period to the renewal of the war, Mr. Pitt continued publicly to support Mr. Addington, though we have been told, indeed, that he *privately* disapproved of many of his measures, and signified to him, *privately*, such disapprobation.†

Upon the whole, however, Mr. Pitt's conduct towards ministry, must, during this period, be considered, as approving,

* Curfory Remarks.—Plowden's Postliminious Preface.

† See Brief Answer, &c. and Mr. Ward's Pamphlet.

nugatory, or mysterious. He certainly did not oppose ministers, nor censure their measures publicly. Towards the close of the session, however, a negotiation was opened, for Mr. Pitt's return to power.—It failed, and his support became more cold and precarious.

During the recess, in the succeeding autumn, (1803), the measures Mr. Addington and his colleagues had adopted for the defence of the country, from the crudeness of their conception, the negligence and perplexity, in which they were framed, and the consequent difficulty of comprehending or executing them, produced such an extensive dissatisfaction, that it became manifest the ministry were losing ground, in the estimation of the country; and upon the meeting of parliament, in November, it appeared, that this impression had communicated itself to both Houses of Parliament.

The debates, however, went on rather languidly till the Christmas recess; when there arose a co-operation between the two parties distinguished by the appellations, of the old, and the new opposition: this co-operation had, for its object, the removal of Mr. Addington and his colleagues, under the declared sense of their inadequacy to the prosperous management of the country.

At this time Mr. Pitt resumed his place in the house of commons, (where he had before attended rarely), and assisted with his eloquence, his vote, and his adherents, to promote what was now become the common cause; namely, to displace the existing administration.

A three weeks struggle ensued, at the close of which, it was palpably the general wish, and almost the common object within doors, and apparently so without, that an

administration should be formed from all parties, in such manner as to comprehend all the strength and talent which the country could supply; and this wish was thought to animate Mr. Pitt's mind, as sincerely and zealously as any other man's.

Under these circumstances, and with these hopes and expectations floating in the country, his Majesty was pleased to open a communication with Mr. Pitt, upon the subject, of forming a new Government; and from that moment, the two houses of parliament and the nation began to exult in the anticipation of this their common object. Little was it then apprehended, that the cheering prospect just opened to their view, was speedily to be closed in gloom and darkness—that the endeavours of all parties were to be frustrated, and that the hopes and happiness of the country, were soon to suffer so severe a shock, as a total failure in the object of their dearest wish.

Mr. Pitt, however, opened to our eyes this melancholy scene—this sad reverse—and we are doomed to regret, just at the moment of imagined possession, an administration on a broad and comprehensive scale, and to endure one, of a formation and character wholly different—an administration, probably, inadequate to the exigencies of the country, but certainly inadequate to its just expectations, its palpable means to furnish, and its earnest endeavours to obtain.

It has been generally understood, that the obstacle to forming an administration upon a broad and extensive basis, arose from a determination on the part of the crown, to exclude Mr. Fox—in consequence of which, the friends of Mr. Fox, as well as Lord Grenville, Mr. Wyndham, and their friends, declined taking any official situations—alleging, probably, that as their hopes and endeavours were directed to a comprehensive administration, composed of the strength

and talent of all parties, they did not choose to give their sanction to one, formed upon a principle of exclusion. Such a conduct, there being, on the part of the new opposition, no subsisting engagement of any kind to Mr. Fox and his friends, was highly honourable, and affords a strong and convincing proof, that their late exertions had been animated, by higher views and more noble feelings, than vague ambition, or a mere desire of place.

It is under an impression of this supposed determination on the part of the crown, to exclude Mr. Fox from its counsels, that the following observations are made—in the course of which it is proposed to consider:

How far this exclusion can be deemed constitutional.

How far, under all the circumstances of the case, it ought to have operated on the conduct of Mr. Pitt.

Lastly, how far his actual conduct has been regulated, either by tenderness towards the prerogative of the crown, or regard to the sentiments and welfare of the country.

It may be necessary to premise, that it is not intended to insinuate, that the determination alluded to, could really originate with his Majesty, though arguments may be urged, in the course of this discussion, of that apparent tendency—owing to the perplexity which would attend the perpetual introduction of the supposed authors of such advice.

1. *How far the exclusion of Mr. Fox can be deemed constitutional.*

The justice or propriety of the exclusion of Mr. Fox, in particular, forms no part of the question, as far as relates to constitutional ground—because such justice or propriety cannot constitutionally be estimated

by the royal mind—nor does there appear to be any argument, which can justify or condemn it, *in this point of view*, that would not apply with equal force to Mr. Pitt, or to any other man. The object of our enquiry does not relate to the person excluded, but to the principle of exclusion ; and in the present case, not to exclusion, in concurrence with the house of commons and the country, but in direct opposition to both.

It is a principle in the British constitution, that the king can do no wrong—upon what grounds?—Surely, that no wrong may be done without responsibility existing somewhere. Accordingly, every act of executive power is supposed to proceed, and constitutionally speaking, does proceed, from responsible advisers of the crown. Not a peerage, a pension, or grant of any kind, which can affect the public, emanates from the royal authority, that is not subservient to this principle ;

the very speeches from the throne are subject to this rule, and are uniformly treated accordingly.

To such an extent, is this principle inherent in the constitution, that it would be indecent and improper to suppose, that the executive authority was, in any case, exerted, but under this salutary maxim—And hence the constitutional check, which the house of commons enjoys over the executive power, in the appointment or continuance of improper ministers, is, in fact, over the *advisers of the crown*, and not over the crown itself. An opposite doctrine would violate the whole spirit of our Government—It would presume responsibility in the royal person.

On the other hand, it is equally clear, that the choice of its own ministers, is the just and constitutional prerogative of the

Crown, subject to no exception or restraint.

It must be evident, therefore, that neither of these two opposite and contending powers, which the constitution acknowledges, can be pushed to the extreme, in theory or in practice, without interfering with the other. The business of government, and all its duties, must be suspended, if the crown and the two houses of parliament, were to persist in an obstinate adherence to the full legal exercise of their respective rights, whenever they did not concur in their approbation or dislike; and nothing less than universal confusion could ensue. The crown might have thus continued Mr. Addington, for ever, as minister, and the house of Commons might, for ever, have denied him their support.

Happily, however, the spirit of the constitution supplies a remedy to this evil, and

the usual practice of the crown, has been conformable thereto. This remedy, or rather preventive, is composed of two ingredients; a responsibility attaching somewhere, for all acts of executive power; and a constitutional right in the house of commons, to refuse support—which, in its spirit and effect, is a power of rejection.

This responsibility was not instituted, merely to punish wrong when committed, but to prevent wrong from being done; and wrong, in such a case, can only be prevented, by excluding private partialities, personal feelings, and court intrigue, from having any influence in the appointment of the public servants.

Were the king of England to nominate his footman minister, (I purposely suppose the most objectionable case possible) surely *some person* must be responsible for the outrage; and there does not appear

any reason why the same responsibility, should not attach to a capricious exclusion, as to an unwise appointment.

It seems, therefore, that consistently with the constitution, neither appointment nor exclusion, can rest upon any other than public grounds; and that to impute the exclusion of Mr. Fox, in the present instance, to private prejudice, or personal feelings in the royal mind, is to libel and traduce the king—And that to ascribe it to the weakness or wickedness of his advisers, is to burthen them with no more than a just and legitimate, though, in this case, a very heavy, responsibility.

2. How far this determination to exclude, supposing its existence, ought to have operated on the conduct of Mr. Pitt.

To investigate this point, it will be necessary to recur to the circumstances, un-

der which the interview between his majesty and Mr. Pitt took place.

Enough has already been said on this point, up to the period of the avowed co-operation between the old and new oppositions, for the purpose of removing Mr. Addington from the helm. Mr. Pitt had been no party to this co-operation; though, after it was formed, and had made several exertions, he was pleased to concur in its object. It took its rise, and held its course under the influence of public virtue. It was produced by a conviction, that the existing administration were inadequate to the perilous situation, in which the country was then placed—at war without one ally—threatened with immediate invasion—with a crippled trade—an embarrassed finance, and its fame rather sunk than declining—neither feared by enemies, admired by friends, or courted by allies.

Under these circumstances, all parties

gave strong indications of a willingness to unite for their common safety — two parties, actuated by a just feeling for the situation of the country, had co-operated, and Mr. Pitt with his party having now also concurred to displace the late administration, the plain course of things, the natural order of events pointed out a continuance of co-operation, for the purpose of securing to the country, the ulterior benefit in view; namely, the formation of a ministry not only adequate to the exigency of the case, but commensurate with that spirit of union, and scale of action, which had just been so honourably displayed. — Mr. Pitt must have been aware of this willingness, and sensible of the great and important object it had in view.

In order, therefore, to judge of the propriety of his acquiescing in the principle of exclusion, we must call to mind the peculiarity of the case. The necessary al-

ternative, from the state of parties and their late conduct, seemed to be, either an administration upon a broad and extended basis, or one diametrically the reverse—narrow instead of comprehensive—weak instead of efficient—composed of the shreds and remnants of parties, instead of their substance and spirit.

There appeared no medium—circumstances were wholly new. It was not the victory of one party over another, where numbers may be nearly equal, talents nearly equal, and national opinion nearly divided in equal proportions; but it was a general union of weight and talents, for a great national and specific object. It was not a mere altercation of hostile parties, either of which could supply a vigorous ministry—not a mere struggle for popularity and pre-eminence—not the efforts of a court phalanx on one side, against its usual opponents on the other, but it was the general voice of

the houses of parliament and country, demanding a comprehensive and efficient administration. Such was the tendency, and such the object, of the late repeated divisions, which produced the downfall of Mr. Ad-dington.

If this be a just representation of the case, it might well be questioned, whether there exists any power known to the constitution, which could legally counteract this general wish of the country.

Had ministers refused to resign, it is probable an address might have been carried to the throne, requesting an administration formed upon the basis above alluded to. If such had been actually the case, as it was the case in substance, would any man have advised his Majesty to deny to the house of commons this their constitutional desire?—or if he had been base enough to have given such advice, would

he have been hardy enough to avow it? The case would then have exhibited, (as in substance, it seems now to have done) a struggle between the houses of parliament and the secret advisers of the crown. And justice has not been done by Mr. Pitt, in his interview with the king, either to his Majesty, or the country, (as it, most assuredly, has not been done in the event) if the peculiar nature of the case, was not fairly and fully stated, if the sentiments and expectations of his parliament, were not made known to him, and if the perilous situation of the country was not fully explained.

It may be asked, what could have been Mr. Pitt's conduct, if, after having made to his Majesty an ample and accurate statement of the case, he had still found, that the secret advisers of the crown had so deceived or poisoned the royal mind, as to induce a determination on the part of his

Majesty, to adhere to the principle of exclusion.

This supposition, it is, indeed, very difficult to make ; it is directly at variance with the spirit of the constitution ; and Mr. Pitt's conduct in this delicate and extreme case, can only be fairly appreciated, by considering what would have been the probable consequences of his declining office, and comparing them with what we are now to look for, from his acceptance.

It must be observed, however, that an ample and accurate statement of the situation of the country and the expectations of the publick, would have comprised a good deal ; and would have required more firmness than, it is feared, Mr. Pitt was induced to exert.

His Majesty ought to have been informed, that an adherence to the principle of exclusion, in the present crisis, must, of ne-

cessity, be maintained in opposition to the wishes of the public, the interests of the country, and in defiance of the house of commons; which it certainly must have been, if Mr. Pitt had not been induced to acquiesce in the principle, and *himself to give it practical effect.*

His Majesty ought to have been reminded, that whoever approached his royal presence for the purpose of forming an administration, became *responsible* to the country for the advice he gave. His Majesty ought also to have been respectfully informed, that instances might occur, where a compliance with the wishes of the king, would comprehend a sacrifice of the interests of the crown.

Whether the intire substance of these suggestions, and of many others, which must have occurred to Mr. Pitt, could have been enforced upon his majesty, in any

degree equal to their importance,—*at a single interview*;—and whether any man, duly impressed with the situation of the country, sincerely believing that its best safety was to be found in a comprehensive and efficient administration, and zealously intending to promote it, could have honestly brought his mind, *at once*, to acquiesce in a principle, destructive of the hopes, and subversive of the views, which *he himself*, in common with others, had taught the country to indulge, is a point on which *the public must and do entertain strong doubts*.

But, supposing all these various topics could have been urged—*at a single interview*—and supposing they were really urged, by Mr. Pitt, with his utmost ability—whether a fair trial could be made of their effect, without the interposition of any delay, without giving his Majesty any interval of repose, to reflect upon the case, and to make up his mind accordingly—is a point, on which, what-

ever the public may think, it is suspected, that those who have been in the habits of transacting business with his Majesty, *can entertain no doubts whatever.*

3. How far Mr. Pitt's conduct has been regulated by tenderness to the prerogative of the crown, or by attention to the sentiments and welfare of the country.

Mr. Pitt, if any one, must be considered, agreeably to the principles of the constitution, as the adviser of his Majesty in forming the present administration. But it is said by his friends, (and probably he will himself assert,) that he really advised his Majesty to form one, on a very different basis and more extensive scale. He seems, therefore, to have placed himself in this awkward dilemma. He has, constitutionally speaking, either given advice to the crown, which was not attended to, and has submitted to be responsible for advice, which he did not approve; or he has betrayed the house of commons, and withheld from his Majesty that advice, which

he, and they, thought essential to the welfare of the empire. He is, probably, in fact, become responsible for advice, which he did not give; and he has not given, (to any constitutional effect) that advice, for which he was willing to become responsible. All this would perhaps be of very little consequence, if the mischief of it ended with Mr. Pitt's fame and character: but alas,

“ It plagues the country.”

How different would have been his situation and that of the empire, had Mr. Pitt declined office instead of accepting it, on principles directly opposite—probably to his real opinion—certainly to his reputed opinion—and also opposite to any advice to the crown, which he can constitutionally avow.

The advantages of such refusal, to his own reputation, would have been great

indeed; but the advantages to have been derived from it to his country, were still more ample and important; of a nature and extent rather to be estimated by the mind, than recounted in detail: and the loss of them, it is to be feared, will furnish this nation with a source of deep and lasting regret.

It is foreign to our present subject, to expatiate on the remote consequences of such refusal on the part of Mr. Pitt—the immediate effect of it on the formation of ministry is our concern; and it seems evident, that such refusal must inevitably have secured to the country that broad and comprehensive administration, for which Mr. Pitt himself had been ostensibly contending, in concurrence with the old and new oppositions; and to recommend which to his Majesty, was stated by his friends, to be his most anxious wish, and most earnest endeavour.

Had Mr. Pitt refused to form an administration, upon a weak and narrow basis, where is the man who would have dared to undertake the odious task? Had Mr. Pitt refused to accept or participate power, upon a scheme and scale hostile to the interests of his country, and adverse to the sentiments of parliament and the public, where is the man who would have presumed to have become a candidate for the ignominious eminence?

Had his Majesty applied to any other person, and met with a similar refusal upon the same grounds, he would have been, at once disabused of all the noxious influence of secret advisers — of all the hollow treachery and selfish duplicity of court intrigue — and of all that “solemn plausibility” and state parade, which has, too frequently, interposed between his Majesty and his subjects. He would have heard

and felt the language of truth—he would have understood the temper of the house of commons, the situation of the country, and the wishes of the public; and, having really understood this, it were a libel and calumny on the crown, to suppose, there could have been one moment's hesitation, to comply with their unanimous desire and universal expectation.

Since Mr. Pitt's acceptance of power, his adherents have urged the impropriety of *forcing* any minister upon the king; which the conduct here suggested has been represented as having a tendency to effect, and thus to controul the legitimate prerogative of the crown.

To this it is replied, that the constitution, in theory, acknowledges no such thing as forcing the king, though its spirit does authorise a refusal to support—and a continued “refusal to support government

“ till power be in the hands of persons acceptable to the people *;” that, strictly speaking, it cannot happen, because the wishes of the king and of the house of commons can never, on this point, be *constitutionally* at variance—the prerogative of the Crown, to appoint ministers, being established for the purpose of giving effect to the public voice.

But it is to be observed, the present was no extreme case to the Crown, though it was to the country—It was not the caprice of the one, against the caprice of the other—It was not an individual favoured by the one, against an individual favoured by the other.—For, even allowing, that the Crown did entertain a prejudice against one person—and allowing, also, that such a prejudice, would afford a constitutional ground of exclusion, still, we must insist, that the question can not fairly be stated to rest, in

* Thoughts on the Causes of the present Discontents.

the present instance, upon an objection to an *individual*.

The alternative to the Crown, was not, between the appointment of one man, whom it did approve as minister, and of one, whom it did not; but between an *administration containing one individual* disagreeable to the crown, the remainder being unobjectionable, and such an administration as we now possess.

The alternative to the country was very different—it was between an administration *composed on a principle and basis* wholly agreeable, or on a principle and basis wholly disagreeable. On one side, the objection was to an individual; On the other, to a system.

Mr. Pitt might have been minister, as he now is, agreeably to the supposed wishes of the crown. Mr. Fox's admission to office did not exclude Mr. Pitt, or *any one* of his adherents, while Mr. Pitt's admission did exclude, from the peculiar nature of the

case, and the peculiar situation, in which they were placed, *all* Mr. Fox's connexions. Mr. Fox's admission to office, upon the broad basis, which he and his friends recommended, required from Mr. Pitt or his partizans, no desertion of principle, or of political alliance; while Mr. Pitt's admission, upon the basis which he did not recommend, but has thought proper to adopt, did demand from Mr. Fox and his partizans, a palpable desertion of friends, and an avowed relinquishment of principle. Thus, on one side, a very slight sacrifice was required; On the other, a very great one.

It is worth while, to pursue this point somewhat further—the more so, as this objection of forcing a minister upon the crown, has been made the apology for Mr. Pitt's conduct; and as a little investigation may distinctly point out, what degree of tenderness towards the prerogative, Mr. Pitt, in

the course he has actually pursued, can fairly lay claim to.

In the first place, it may be observed, that every refusal to support the existing ministers, is an attempt to controul the crown, in the exercise of its choice. There is no very great difference, between a continued refusal to support, (we presume, Mr. Pitt's refusal to support would have been continued, as long as the same grounds had remained, which produced his opposition to Mr. Addington), and an endeavour, by lawful means, to secure such an administration as is desired.

For the house of commons to prescribe any individual to the crown, would be indecent and unconstitutional; but to refuse its support upon good grounds, till a ministry was formed agreeable to itself, and conformable to public opinion, would be both constitutional and decorous. Perseverance in

such a case, would be a question, not of constitution, but of policy.

If the word *force*, however, is to be applied at all, and if a tenderness towards the crown be recognised as sound doctrine, and a salutary principle, still it is evident, that Mr. Pitt's opposition to Mr. Addington, and subsequent acceptance of power upon the basis of exclusion, cannot be justified upon any *such* ground; as it certainly has evinced no *such* tenderness.

It appears, upon a view of the whole transaction, that his Majesty *has been forced*, (in that sense of the word, which, in behalf of Mr. Pitt, has been disclaimed) to relinquish Mr. Addington*, though not to

* Of his Majesty's preference of Mr. Addington as a minister there can be no doubt; indeed, ample proof of the continuance of this predilection, is to be found in his majesty's dismissing Lord Amherst from the bed-chamber, since the appointment of Mr. Pitt to office—in his pressing Mr. Addington to accept a pension of 3000l. per annum, with the titles of Earl of Bambury, Viscount Wallingford, and Baron Reading—as well as, in the recent breakfast at Richmond Park.

accede to the wishes of the house of commons and the public—that his Majesty has been *forced*, far enough to remove a ministry agreeable to himself, but not enjoying the confidence of the house, though not far enough, to establish such a one as was expected and desired, by the public, at the risk of being not wholly unobjectionable to himself. His Majesty has been *forced*, far enough to disgust himself, but not far enough, to satisfy the country. He has been *forced*, far enough to place Mr. Pitt on the treasury bench, but not far enough, to place the government in the hands of a comprehensive and efficient administration. His Majesty has been *forced*, far enough to establish the constitutional precedent, but not far enough, to secure the constitutional benefit in view.

Does this conduct exhibit any *tendernefs* to the crown?

It is strange and unaccountable, that any man should approve and execute this harsh

system of *force*, just to the degree that should *force* himself into office, to the exclusion of those whom, it had been the common object of all parties, as well as of himself, to introduce. Nor is it less strange and unaccountable, that Mr. Pitt should not have foreseen the possibility of some such objection, as that alluded to in these remarks, and been prepared to meet it *—or, if not so prepared, that his mind, having been engaged a week or two in this course of lenient opposition to the crown, should not have, at once, resolved, after having incurred the guilt of *force*, not to sacrifice the object. But it is above measure strange and unaccountable, if, from having accurately and scrupulously adjusted the degree of *force* that it was constitutional and decorous to exert, he submitted reluctantly to relinquish the object he had in view, that he should not

* We do not give credit to the calumny circulated, that Mr. Pitt had previously settled with the Lord Chancellor the objection which his Majesty should make.

have resolved, at least, for the sake of character, and to avoid injurious imputations, not to be, at once, and without consultation with any one, the only person of all who had co-operated in this system of *forcing*, to be benefitted by its partial success.

In estimating the degree of force he could conscientiously employ, for the benefit of his country, he must have settled, in his own mind, proportions the most perplexing, with a nicety and precision quite inimitable.—He must have fixed the exact gradations of guilt, in this system of *force*, with reference to the end proposed, and also with reference to success and failure.—He must have calculated, the exact value to the country, of a comprehensive administration, compared with the value of *Mr. Pitt in it's stead*.

The whole transaction will appear, too, more extraordinary, if the prevailing opi-

nion should be confirmed, that the objection of the crown, originally, applied full as forcibly to Lord Melville as to Mr. Fox; yet Lord Melville is seated in the cabinet, and will perhaps disclaim this *force*, as conscientiously as Mr. Pitt.

Lord Melville's tendernefs towards the prerogative of the crown, must, indeed, be of a *most peculiar nature, and delicate texture*. It is perfectly consistent with *such* tendernefs, to be shocked, in common with Mr. Pitt, at forcing any minister upon his Majesty, yet to come from Scotland, with his pocket full of proxies, and a friendly attendance of commoners, for the express purpose of forcing *out* the very ministers, who originated in the choice, and still enjoyed the confidence, of the crown. It is perfectly consistent with *such* tendernefs, to abstain from this *force* when it is to be *exerted*, for the purpose of forming a broad and comprehensive administration; yet to employ it, when it is to be *used*, for the purpose of his own *cordial*

and *voluntary* appointment to office. The conduct of Mr. Pitt and Lord Melville upon this occasion, seems to have been perfectly in unison—whether from any similarity of motive, or sympathy of feeling, the public must determine.

If Mr. Pitt's conduct, however, has not been influenced by any tenderness towards the prerogative of the crown, as little does it appear to have been regulated, by any attention to the wishes or the welfare of the country.

The existing administration has certainly been formed, in direct opposition to those wishes, and also, it is feared, to that welfare. It

* Mr. Addington can, probably, appreciate, better than any other man, the *nature and delicacy* of Lord Melville's *political tenderness*—Mr. Addington can decide, whether Lord Melville was intrusted with the power and influence of Government, in Scotland, at the late General Election—and whether the use he has made of it, either in Scotland or at St. Stephen's, has been conformable to Mr. Addington's just expectations—and whether the Peerage he received, during Mr. Addington's Administration, could, *fairly*, be employed for its overthrow.

would far exceed the limits we have prescribed to ourselves, and the range of our proposed object—to examine the justice of this opinion, as far as relates to the welfare of the country. But in confirmation of what has been already said, to establish the former point, of its having been formed in contradiction to the general wish, we need only recur to the extent and degree, in which mortification and disappointment pervaded the public mind, upon Mr. Pitt's acceptance of his present situation, on the basis of exclusion.

It is not very easy, upon any occasion, to appreciate accurately the extent and degree of public disappointment. But if ever there was a time, when public expectation was wrought up more highly than another, upon the subject of the ministry, it seemed to be upon the late retreat of Mr. Addington. Every countenance, every voice, proclaimed uncommon anxiety during the moments of suspense, and the most eager expectations, when it was known that the

king had opened a communication with Mr. Pitt.

The friends and the foes of Mr. Pitt's political career, were alike anxious for the event, and mourned, in common, the calamitous result. All parties, and almost all persons, were disappointed. The past, the present, and the future, alike rushed upon their minds in melancholy array.

A retrospect reminded them, how much blood and treasure we had spent, during the late war, with little benefit to ourselves, to our allies, or to the continent; nor was it forgotten, that in the debates on peace, certainty of success, (an ambiguous word) was declared not worth the probable expence of another campaign*; nor could it fail to be observed, that the promised boon to our exhausted purses, and to our wearied patience, "indemnity for the past, and security for the future," had ended in new demands

* See Mr. Addington's speech.

for money, and new appeals to our spirit, for personal exertion.

An attention to the present, was as little satisfactory as a recurrence to the past;—one whole year of warfare, without any progress made towards a termination of the contest, or any prospect of such event opened to our view—a powerful and implacable enemy threatening us continually with invasion, with ample means (as far as any means could be ample) for executing the threat, while the state of our preparation was certainly not commensurate with our ability, though, possibly, more than adequate to the danger.

As to the future, no system of any kind appeared operating for our benefit; nor was there any prospect of approaching amendment; there was nothing on which hope could repose, except what was furnished by the symptoms of an approaching union of all parties, in their country's cause. Such a situation called upon us to exert our utmost fortitude, and even warned us that

the full employment of all the vigour, all the wisdom, and all the energies the country could supply, might not enable us to escape calamity.

How awfully does this warning voice vibrate in our ears, upon the bare mention of Ireland !!!

It was natural, under such circumstances, that a very strong anxiety should be universally felt; and it was natural that a very grievous disappointment should be experienced, upon the discovery that the expected comprehensive basis, which should combine the talents and strength of all parties, had been renounced, in favour of a narrow and noxious principle of exclusion.

If it were our object, to appreciate the merits of the administration, put together by Mr. Pitt, upon this principle, we should be inclined here, to examine the quality and extent of the changes which have been made — to estimate the degree of union, vigour and efficiency likely to be pro-

duced — to compare the present ministry with the late one — and to calculate the probable benefit to be derived to the country, by the exchange.

If such was our object, we could not fail to remark—that Mr. Pitt has retained more than half of the former cabinet*, whose plans he, so lately, treated with scorn, and whose general inadequacy he, so lately, held up to the derision of the country—that Mr. Pitt must either now renounce these opinions himself, or require his present colleagues to join with him, in condemning all the measures they have

* Members of the old Cabinet retained in Office by Mr. Pitt—

Lord Chancellor,
Duke of Portland,
Earl of Westmoreland,
Earl of Chatham,
Lord Hawkesbury,
Lord Castlereagh.

Members of the old Cabinet dismissed from Office by Mr. Pitt—

Mr. Addington,
Earl of St. Vincent,
Lord Hobart,
Mr. Yorke.

been “ *exercising their lungs*” these two months past, to defend.

We could not fail to remark,—that the union, vigour, and efficiency, so lately recommended by Mr. Pitt, seems to have been all comprised in his own person;—and that the general dissatisfaction and distrust cannot possibly be removed; but only changed in its direction, *by the mere appointment of Mr. Pitt.*

We could not fail to remark,—that either all the errors and deficiencies which Mr. Pitt had, so lately, been employed to detect and to reprobate, with reference to the army, the navy, and finance, had no existence—that the perilous situation of the country, and the critical state of the continent, he had, so lately, insisted on, were the offspring of his own imagination, or, that, in his opinion, all these various and extensive evils may be rectified, the safety of

the country secured, and the cause and prosperity of the continent advanced, *by the mere appointment of Mr. Pitt.*

Under the pressure of surrounding difficulties, and amidst the uncertainties of war, this general sensation of disappointment is keenly aggravated, by the reflection, that the very existence of such an administration *as was expected*, and as the country *was*, and *is*, able to furnish, would have augmented the advantage of every success, and diminished the evil of every failure.

Indeed, it is most deeply to be lamented, that any country should be precluded, (by whatever cause) from exercising its full powers to its own advantage, from employing all the means and all the energies it may possess, for its own preservation and happiness, and from gratifying the universal wish of its inhabitants by conferring on itself and them, a general benefit.

This Country has just now suffered this calamity; but it may well be questioned, whether the calamity be confined to the British Empire.

Viewing the present melancholy and degraded situation of the continent, our regrets at the late failure of honest endeavours for a vigorous and extended administration, may well take a wider range; not in the wildness of visionary extravagance, or of vague theory, but in the spirit of sober prudence, and on the grounds of rational presumption.

England, unless her destiny is at hand, must still hold no mean place, in European politics—And if any hope yet remains for the emancipation of the continent, for the general cause of liberty, for the maintenance of regulated and rational government, such hope must probably spring from

England, and expand into action, by England's concurrence and support.

Whether such hopes and views are rational or romantick, and whether more effectually to be promoted by wisdom or by war, we shall leave to the sense and feelings of Englishmen to decide. But if they are to be indulged, there can exist no doubt to what extent—to what incalculable extent—such an administration as has been alluded to, must have contributed to accomplish so important and desirable an end.

Whether such an administration as we possess, and formed in the manner it has been, is calculated to realize these hopes, or even to do justice to the nation, is a subject of serious, and painful enquiry, which we forbear to investigate.

All that is here contended, is, that the country ought to have enjoyed the best admi-

nistration it could supply, and that an arrangement ought not to have been formed, upon grounds productive of very extensive dissatisfaction and distrust, when it might have been formed, upon grounds productive of general confidence, and universal approbation.

The failure of these our hopes, is a calamity, which we all deplore, which must be ascribed, with all its consequences, to Mr. Pitt's precipitate acceptance of power, and to his undertaking to form an administration, upon the basis of exclusion; because his refusal, we are confident, must have precluded others from such acceptance, and ensured an administration of an opposite description, and character.

Mr. Pitt may have been sincere and earnest in his endeavours, as far as he has gone, to promote the common object in view; but the welfare of the country, (to say nothing of his own political reputation) required

that he should have gone further, and have declined power, *until* he had some just grounds for accepting it, as well as some rational pledge, for its stability and effect.

The particular circumstances of the country formed an exception to ordinary times—the particular state of parties formed an exception to ordinary rules. There has not existed, during the present reign, either such a perilous crisis, or such a willingness for political union.

Whether these circumstances have had their due weight in the formation of the present administration, and whether they have been turned, as much as they might have been, to the benefit of the country, by employing its utmost constitutional powers, to call forth its utmost practical exertions, it is left to the judgment of the public to determine.

To those who have been parties to the formation of that administration, and to the intrigue attending it, we must express our astonishment and regret, that they could fail to perceive—that the best security of court-influence is to be found, in its judicious exertion—the best security of the power of the crown, in its salutary limits—the best security of the country, in a strict adherence to the constitution.

THE END.

